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Communication Media and Their Effectiveness in Reaching the Youth in Rural Areas: The Case of Youth Enterprise Development Fund in Kenya

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Abstract
Most youth face the unemployment problem due to scarce job opportunities, lack of start-up capital, skills and lack of information on available resources. The introduction of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund in Kenya was first dismissed as a campaign gimmick to get votes from the youth but viewed objectively, it was a creative strategy towards job creation and income generation for the youth in rural areas. This paper seeks to identify the modes of communicating information about the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) to the youth in rural areas. The main objective of the paper is to identify the communication media that were utilized in disseminating information about the YEDF in relation to their effectiveness in reaching the youth. The study was carried out in Kabianga division of Kericho County among 210 youth. The youth of age bracket between 18 to 35 years formed the population of the study. The study found that mass media and interpersonal media channels were utilized to communicate information to the youth on Youth Enterprise Development Fund. The findings further revealed that other than informing a vast majority of audience, most mass media channels did not provide support for changing attitudes of individuals towards new ideas in the rural areas. Interpersonal channels had a personal influence on adoption of the idea on formation of youth groups. From the study findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports should implement fully integrated communication programmes utilizing a variety of complementary channels wherever possible, so that each medium reinforces and multiplies the importance of the others in an integrated network. This will ensure that widespread coverage is achieved.
Keywords: Modes, Communication, Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Rural area, Kenya

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Youth Affairs report (2006) shows that the Ministry allocated one billion shillings in 2006/2007 year and 2.25 billion in 2008/2009 financial year as Youth Enterprise Development Fund. The fund is expected to spur entrepreneurial culture among the youth so that many of them can embrace and join the micro and small enterprise sector and subsequently, stimulate economic growth. It is further concerned with helping open opportunities for young people to play a major role in the development of the country. In other words, the fund is one of the solutions the government is rolling out to contain unemployment among the youth and to spur industrialization by the year 2030.

According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs report (2006) the YEDF is expected to have a number of positive effects on the communities throughout the society. For instance, there will be more opportunities for the disadvantaged youth to create their own enterprises and acquire new skills. They will be empowered to participate in more social, economic and political activities. As young persons gain the experience of running successful enterprises, it will mean more young people becoming economic leaders in their communities. There will be strengthening of support structures for youth development.

However, general awareness on the presence of government policies such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund is not enough, the youth ought to have adequate knowledge on how they can access it and utilize it. The fund is meant to impact positively on their lives in terms of alleviating unemployment problems and providing a livelihood for their families. The question that arises, therefore, is on the extent to which the channels of communication used in disseminating the information on the Youth Fund were effective in passing the relevant information, especially to the youth in rural areas.

This paper therefore sought to identify the modes of sourcing for information on YEDF. Specifically, it sought to identify the modes of communication used and establish the level of awareness of the youth on the Youth Enterprise Development Fund for each mode of communication used.

2. Materials and Methods

This study was carried out in Kabianga division in Kericho County. The County population size was projected at 503,469 by 2002 with a rural population of 337,774. Like the nation's population, the population of the County is predominantly young with about 57 per cent falling below 20 years of age and about 76 per cent of the population below 30 years. About 110,000 youths fall in the age category of 18-35 years. Most of the unemployed youth lack the necessary collateral required by financial institutions to access loans, some are HIV/AIDS victims making them a dependent lot and the school drop outs lack basic technical skills (Kericho County Development Plan 2002-2008).

This study employed descriptive cross-sectional research design. All youth within the age bracket of 18-35 years in Kabianga Division were the target of the study. Out of the 7 locations in the division, 3 were purposively selected. From the 3 sub-locations chosen, convenient sampling was used to obtain 70 respondents making a total sample size of 210. The main tool of data collection was survey-questionnaires for statistical analysis. However, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used to complement with qualitative data.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Age of respondents

According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, those entitled to apply for the YEDF were between 18 to 35 years old. Out of the 210 respondents involved in the study, it was noted that 126 (60%) were between 18 and 25 years while 84 (40%) were between 26 and 35 years. This is presented in the table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' age

Age bracket (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	**126**	**60.0**
26-35	**84**	**40.0**
Total	**210**	**100.0**

As shown in table 1, the majority of the youth 126 (60%) were young (junior youth) the majority of whom may not be married. The group were mostly school leavers that's why most of them were available during the period when the research was being conducted (school-going period).This group needed sensitization on the availability of resources like the youth fund so as to utilize it in various ways since they seemed not to be focused on entrepreneurial matters.

The other 84 (40%) were senior youth most of whom may be married with families. They were observed to have considerable knowledge on the availability of the funds. During focus group discussion with them, they said that they had received the information through radios and friends but were not certain that the government was really going to honour the pledge. Some claimed that it was a campaign strategy that the government in power was using to win votes from the youth during the general elections which were to be held in December 2007.This is a pointer to the fact that people in rural areas are usually skeptical that well meaning government policies such as YEDF may sound too good to be true.

3.2 Gender of the respondents

The respondents' gender was considered in order to determine their interaction patterns with communication channels in an effort to determine sources of the information on the YEDF. From the sample selected, 132 (62.9%) were males while 78 (37.1%) were females. It was observed that the whole population had more males than females which is the reason why many of them participated in the study. This distribution has been illustrated in figure 1

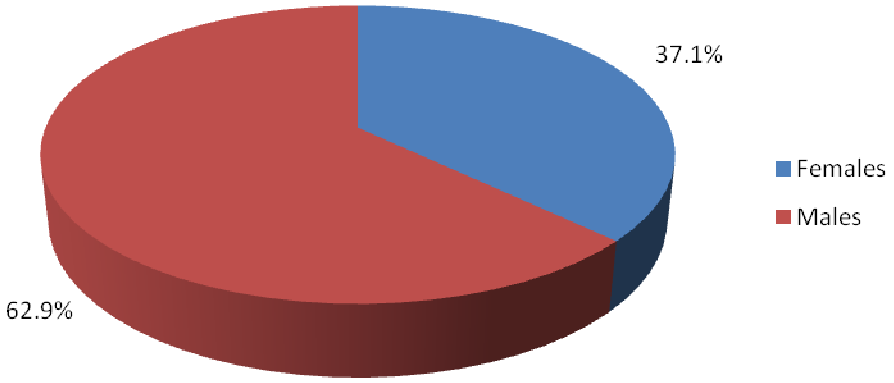

Figure 1: Pie Chart showing gender of respondents

From their responses, more males appeared to get easy access to various channels of communication available in the area than their female counterparts. This was partly due to their interest in visiting public places like hotels and playgrounds and where several media channels could be accessed. Their meetings in such places further served the purpose of updating one another on current affairs and new developments like the issue of Youth Enterprise Development Fund. Females on the other hand were limited in accessing information originating from outside the community due to the fact that they are usually busy with domestic chores.

3.3 Mass media channels

To find out respondents' access and utilization of mass media channels, they were asked to state how often they listened to the radio and/or watched television, how often they read a daily newspaper and how often they used internet. In observing radio as an audio channel, most of the respondents 196 (93.3%) indicated that they listened to it daily. This was attributed to its availability in most homes, 4 (1.9%) claimed that they used it once a week while 10 (4.8%) stated that they occasionally utilized it. Television as an audio-visual medium had only 36 (17.1%) respondents who stated that they watched daily while 48 (22.9%) watched it once a week. A large number of them 124 (59.0%) could only access it occasionally and 2 (1%) claimed that they had never utilized it. On the other hand, a large number of respondents 121 (57.6%) stated that they read newspapers occasionally, followed by 50 (23.8%) who claimed that they could only access it once a week, 35 (16.7%) could read it daily while 4 (1.9%) stated that they had never read it. The Internet being one of the channels listed was utilized by the least number of respondents.Generally,130 (6 1.9%) stated that they had never at any point used the internet, 70 (33.3%) respondents claimed that they had occasional access,7 (0.3%) could access it once a week while only 3 (0,1%) accessed it daily.

3.4 Effectiveness of Mass media channels

After being asked how often the respondents accessed and utilized the mass media channels, they were asked to state whether they considered them effective or not in informing the youth about the YEDF.

It was observed that radio was considered effective by the highest number of respondents (190) which represented about 90% of the entire study sample. This was followed by newspapers selected by 112 (53%) of the respondents, followed by television 77 (37% and lastly internet with the lowest number of respondents 23(11%).

This has been summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Effectiveness of mass media channels

Mass media channels	Effective Frequency	Percent (%)
Radio	190	90
Newspaper	112	53
Television	77	37
Internet	23	11

N=210

Radio's effectiveness was attributed to its availability in most families due to its affordability. Even though the radios were locally available, some of the respondents interviewed admitted that they had not received information on Youth Enterprise Development Fund through it. Most of them claimed that they tuned in purposely for entertainment and news purposes. This is due to the fact that radio lacks visual image thus limits listeners' attention.

Dagron (2001) states that "As a tool for social change and participatory communication, the radio has several comparative advantages over the other media. First, it is cost-efficient in terms of investment - both for those that run the station and for the audience. Second, it is pertinent in terms of language and content - ideal for the huge illiterate population that still remains marginalized especially in rural areas of the Third World., Third. it is relevant to local practices, traditions and culture. Fourth once the initial investment in equipment is made, sustainability is feasible, though dependent on the level of community participation. Fifth, in terms of outreach and geographic coverage, radio has a strong advantage over other media since it covers most regions"

According to John (2001), the radio is particularly effective because of some factors. To start with, majority consider it attractive. Most people enjoy listening to radio, particularly if it is well produced and presented. It is generally regarded as a personal, friendly and reliable medium. Secondly, it is available. The local and community radio services are common throughout the world. Where they are not available, it is relatively easy and not prohibitively expensive to set them up. Thirdly, it is accessible. Most people, even in the poorest rural areas, have access to radio receivers. Radio can speak to people directly and in their own language - even those without the benefit of literacy. Lastly, they are affordable. The radio programmes are relatively cheap to produce and transmit. The costs are dramatically less than those for television or video, and usually lower than print or face-to-face teaching and learning costs.

The second most effective communication channel was the newspaper. The few who could access the newspapers shared with their peers thus a copy could serve a large number of people. Those who could attend social places like pubs and hotel could secure at least a copy. The newspaper further permitted a level of detail and permanence. However, it has the disadvantages of being limited to the elites and they are not quick compared to radio or television to reach mass audience.

Television was ranked third in terms of effectiveness. This was attributed to their high cost of purchase for many respondents claimed they could not afford it. Few television channels which could be accessed in the rural area further posed a challenge to its effectiveness. The few who owned them relied on solar panel as a source of power which was often unreliable since the weather would always change (sometimes sunny while most of the times cloudy). Others claimed that they watched only specific programs in the television. Some respondents stated that televised messages are given a short period, in most instances 15 to 30 seconds therefore most viewers not present at the time when being aired miss out important information.

Lastly, the internet was considered the least effective. This was attributed to the rural area of study where there was no electricity. The internet services which could provide clear and elaborate information were totally unavailable in these areas. Most of the respondents interviewed claimed that they did not even know how to use it since they lacked technical skills required to operate it. However, in urban areas internet is recognized as a valuable medium of communication since the information relayed through them are up to date. It has a broad reach and has the advantage of reliance on visual and "audible communication"

It was concluded that among the different types of mass media, radio seemed to be potentially the most

popular mass media channel in the rural area that had the greatest reach.

3.5 Interpersonal channels

The respondents were further asked to state whether the listed interpersonal channels were effective or not. Their frequencies were as follows: friends l85(88%), relatives 101(48%), Barazas l84(88%), seminars l84(88%), church meetings 174(83%) and role models l87 (89%). The findings have been summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Interpersonal Communication Channels.

Interpersonal channels	Effective	
	Frequency	percent (%)
Friends	185	88
Relatives	101	48
Barazas	184	88
Seminars	184	88
Church meetings	174	83
Role models	187	89

N=210

The majority of the respondents, 187 (89%) considered the role models to be the most effective interpersonal channel. This was be attributed to overt achievement/success in business activities and other related areas. This was specifically youth groups in other areas who had benefited from the fund. Seminars and Barazas were equally rated in terms of their effectiveness. They each had frequencies of 184(88%).This second highest number of respondents claimed that detailed information could be obtained through these channels since they allowed individuals to ask questions and seek other clarification.

Friends received almost the same frequency 185(88%) which was notably high. Reports from the interviews conducted revealed that friends were fast in sharing new ideas with their peers. Information could be passed within a relatively short time since they constantly met in various social places. Church meetings were also considered effective by 174 (83%) respondents. This was the group that mostly attends church services on Saturday or Sundays. They claimed that whenever there is new information, their leaders took the initiative of using such meetings to inform them. Relatives were considered the least effective with a frequency of l0l (48%).The youths stated that they would face unfair competition in case they shared vital information such as on youth fund with their relatives while others stated that they lived far away from them thus could not be relied upon.

Generally, it was observed that most interpersonal channels were considered effective by the respondents. The effectiveness of interpersonal channels was attributed to their interactive and convincing nature. This was confirmed by the respondents interviewed who said that interpersonal channels provide the opportunity for in-depth discussions and therefore better understanding. Furthermore, they claimed that the channels utilized appropriate language understood by the whole population thus even the illiterates cannot be left out. The respondents who stated that interpersonal channels were not effective claimed that some channels (Barazas, seminars, church meetings) were time consuming in that they extended for long hours. Others said that such meetings were normally poorly attended by youths and the messages conveyed through them were not accurate enough for the speakers were normally after convincing the listeners.

In a nutshell, all interpersonal channels but relatives (48%) had over 80% respondents who considered the listed channels effective. This was attributed to the fact that interpersonal channels facilitate interaction and allow people to share ideas. They give room for explaining details of a message. Individuals could secure clarification or additional information about the innovation from another individual through interpersonal channels. They, therefore, had a personal influence on adoption of the idea on formation of youth groups. This goes in agreement with Lacefield et al. (1998) who noted that human influence and face-to-face interaction were important factors in the technology transfer and adoption process.

While most groups of youth claimed that they had first obtained information from impersonal sources

like radio and television, this information had relatively little effect in influencing their decisions about formation of youth groups. Mass media channels on the other hand had low percentages of respondents who considered them effective. Except for the radio (90%), most of the mass media channels were considered ineffective. It was then be concluded that other than informing a vast majority of audience, most mass media channels did not provide support for changing attitudes of individuals towards new ideas (like applying for youth fund loans and youth group formation) in the rural areas. Rogers (1983) adds that the mass media channels are important in spreading awareness on new possibilities and practices, but at the stage where decisions are being made about whether to adopt, personal communication through interpersonal networks are influential since they provide a two-way exchange of information.

The study hypothesised that "there is a significant relationship between the mode of communication used to disseminate innovation (YEDF) and adoption of the innovation in a rural environment however, informal personal modes of communication are probably more significant than mass media." Chi-square test was performed to test this hypothesis using 0.05 level of significance. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests on mass media channels and interpersonal channels

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	238.808(a)	165	.000
Likelihood Ratio	148.689	165	.814
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.064	1	.151
N of Valid Cases	210		

a 184 cells (95.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

The chi-square test comparing effectiveness of interpersonal channels and mass media channels was calculated. A significant difference was found d.f x^2 a(165) 238.808, P<0.05). The alternative hypothesis was thus accepted. The youth who had accessed the information through interpersonal channels were likely to adopt the idea than those that had received information through mass media channels. This concurred with the findings that have been presented and discussed.

3.6 Awareness on Youth Enterprise Development Fund

The researcher sought to establish the level of awareness of youth on YEDF through various communication channels and the number that had joined the youth groups. It was observed that 82 (3 9%) respondents were aware of the existence of Youth Enterprise Development Fund, while 128 (61%) were not aware of it. This is presented in figure 2.

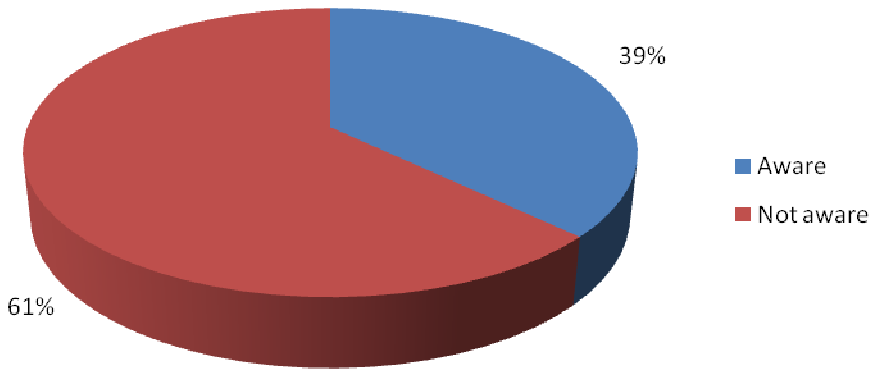

Figure 2: Pie chart showing respondents' awareness of Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

These results imply that most youth in the rural areas of the country had not received the information on YEDF. This can be attributed to the problem of information dissemination by the Ministry of Youth affairs for instance one of the key informants stated that emphasis was laid on the use of mass media channels. The television, internet, newspapers, sessional papers and Kenya gazette were some of the media used. Some of these channels could not be accessed by the rural folk. Probing further on the kind of information that the respondents who indicated awareness had, many of them displayed superficial knowledge about it. They did not know anything beyond "money for youth". They lacked details about it for instance the fact that the youth fund can also be loaned to individuals, without interest and security. Such knowledge of an important government policy may also imply the isolation of rural youth who under normal circumstances do not attend Barazas addressed by chiefs, development agents or extension agents. The adults, especially men, who attend such Barazas may not disseminate information to the young people on issues affecting them.

3.7 Respondents belonging to youth groups

Out of a sample size of 210, only 66 (31.4%) belonged to youth groups in the area. Majority of them 144 (68.6%) stated that they had not thought of joining youth groups.
This is illustrated in table 5.

Table 5: Respondents in youth groups

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	66	31.4
No	144	68.6
Total	210	100

It was observed that many of the youths had not formed groups due to lack of adequate information about the fund. Others claimed that there was no motivation to join groups because no group in the area had benefited since they were formed (about six months). Information obtained from interviews conducted revealed that some of those in groups had already started working on their businesses by contributing start - up capital with the hope that the government was going to fund them in due course. Other groups in existence expressed their disappointment as a result of not having received the funding, as a result their groups had become inactive and some members had pulled out. The condition that only groups which have been functional for at least three months were likely to receive funding was a challenge since many youths claimed that they had no money to start the projects.

Based on the aim of the study which entailed establishing the level of awareness of youth on YEDF through various communication channels, an hypothesis was derived. It stated that "it is possible that there is a significant relationship between the level of awareness of YTDF and the number youth in groups in Kabianga Division"

In order to test this hypothesis, Pearson's chi-square test (X^2) was used to draw conclusions on the association between variables. Cross tabulations were performed on the variables awareness of *Youth Enterprise Development Fund and belonging to youth groups*. Table 6 and 7 show the results.

Table 6: Cross tabulation on Awareness on Youth Enterprise Development Fund and belonging to youth groups.

Count

		Do you belong to a youth group?		Total
		Yes	No	
Are you aware of the youth Enterprise Development Fund?	Yes	66	16	82
	No	0	128	128
Total		66	144	210

Table 7: Chi-Square Tests on level of awareness on YEDF and decision to join youth groups.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	150.244(b)	1	.000		
Continuity Correction(a)	146.532	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	180.500	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	149.528	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	210				

a Computed only for a 2x2 table

b 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 25.77.

From table 7, the chi-square test of independence comparing relationship between the level of awareness of youth on YEDF and the decision to join youth groups was calculated. Significance level of 0.05 was used. The statistics obtained showed that there was a significant relationship X^2 b (1) = 150.244, p<O.05). The hypothesis was therefore accepted. This was in agreement with the findings obtained from the objective discussed in this section. The youth who had obtained adequate information on YEDF through varied channels were more likely to form youth groups than those who had not. It was then concluded that the level of awareness of the youth on existence of Youth Enterprise Development Fund influenced their decision to join youth groups.

The study found out that interpersonal and mass media channels were used. Most interpersonal channels were considered effective by the respondents. This was attributed to the fact that interpersonal channels facilitate interaction and allow people to share ideas. Mass media channels on the other hand were considered ineffective (except for the radio).The channels' unavailability in most rural set-up was stated as the main reason why they considered them ineffective. As for the level of awareness of the youth on Youth Enterprise Development Fund, the study found out that many of the youth lacked information on the fund. Some who claimed to have heard about it had superficial knowledge on it for they could not explain anything beyond "money for youth".

Some of the youth who had received information had managed to form youth groups. The study further revealed that although some had received the information, they claimed that there was no motivation to join youth groups because no group in the area had benefited since their inception (about six months). Others claimed that they had other commitments which could not allow them to be involved in youth group activities.

4. Conclusion

The study found that mass media and interpersonal media channels were utilized to communicate information to the youth on Youth Enterprise Development Fund. The findings further revealed that other than informing a vast majority of audience, most mass media channels did not provide support for changing attitudes of individuals towards new ideas in the rural areas. Interpersonal channels on the other hand had a personal influence on adoption of the idea on formation of youth groups. These channels were regarded as credible and trustworthy thus more influential. This is in line with Mukhongo (2004) who noted that majority of the rural population preferred interpersonal means of communication to mass media channels since the proximity between the sender and receiver increased the chances of effective communication and facilitated the sharing and understanding of the issue at hand. These findings supported the hypothesis that stated that, there is a significant relationship between the mode of communication used to disseminate an innovation and adoption of the innovation in a rural environment. The study further sought to establish the level awareness of the youth on Youth Enterprise Development Fund. It was found that a small number of the youth had joined the youth groups implying that majority of the rural youth were not aware of the existence of Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

5. Recommendations

There is a need for delivery of meaningful information as a way of reducing ignorance among the youth especially at the grass root level (village levels). This calls for more intense educational campaigns targeting the youth. Groups that have benefited from the youth fund can be included in the campaigns.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports should implement fully integrated communication programmes utilizing a variety of complementary channels wherever possible, so that each medium reinforces and multiplies the importance of the others in an integrated network. This will ensure that widespread coverage is achieved. Radio is particularly good at reaching a mass audience, quickly, with simple messages; print media like posters and pamphlets are good reinforcers of broadcasts, and interpersonal sources who provide opportunities for discussing information inputs are most useful for adding credibility to media content, shifting attitudes and prompting behavioural practice changes. Individuals also differ in their processing of information from different media; some learn better from and prefer visual media than audio and vice versa.

Interpersonal channels can be strikingly productive at the grassroots level in the rural set up. Seminars, Barazas, church meetings, ceremonial gatherings should be used because they are cheaper, more accessible and more familiar to the rural people. Opinion leaders and innovation/change agents have a strong influence, the government should therefore identify and use them. The advantage of this strategy is the establishment of a two-way flow of information with an audience and the possibility for immediate feedback as the presentation unfolds. Central points can be reemphasized, remedial information provided where needed, and discussions started with a view toward putting the recommended changes into practice. Since radio was considered one of the most effective mass media channel, the relevant ministries in the government should take advantage of the many local stations in communicating development messages and other information to the target audience. At their best, the FM stations are a well-informed, trusted and valued part of the local social structure. Local radio can involve local people in its programming, providing a platform for local ideas and opinions and responding quickly and effectively to listeners' comments, questions and suggestions in relation to innovations.

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